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EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE

Senator Julie Kushner, Co- Chair
Representative Robyn Porter, Co- Chair
Senator Jorge Cabrera, Vice-Chair
Representative Emmanuel Sanchez, Vice-Chair
Thursday March 3rd, 2022
10:00 a.m.

STRONG SUPPORT HB 5251– An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation for Dispatchers

Senators Kushner and Cabrera, Representatives Porter and Sanchez, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, my name is Maureen A. Will and I am the Director of Communications at the Newtown Emergency Communications Center in Newtown. I am a strong supporter of the passage of HB 5251.

Every day, Connecticut Public Safety Telecommunicators (PSTs) drive to and from their homes to their respective Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) regardless of the day, the time, or the weather conditions. We have traveled during hurricanes, winter weather, and other natural disasters, all to answer the emergency calls for help from our Connecticut residents. Each day PSTs from all over the state drive to and from their 911 center, sometimes after long and stressful shifts, without a second thought. They do it to ensure the safety of the residents and visitors of this great state.

Similar to our emergency responder colleagues (e.g., firefighters and police officers), PSTs are required to work sometimes in the worst of conditions. PSTs can be mandated to stay over their shift, to come in early, or even to come in on their day off. This is done to ensure the safety and security of the public. The difference, however, between PSTs and firefighters or police officers is that PSTs are currently not afforded the same protection for their commute to and from the 911 center. Nonetheless, their job is just as critical. You have the opportunity to change that and to show the PSTs across the state that their chosen career is essential, and their Legislature recognizes and supports them.

While it is understood that there may be a cost for including PSTs within our municipalities' Workman Compensation programs, it is well worth the investment. PSTs are often the unseen with many people only interacting with them over a phone or radio. However, their duties are no less important than other responders. If PSTs were not there, who would answer the phones, dispatch the fire departments, and ensure police officer safety?

COVID-19 has changed how the workforce operates with many people having the ability to work from home. The PSTs cannot. No matter the weather, the traffic, the pandemic, or any other disaster event, Connecticut's PSTs will be there to answer the call. We are only asking for the same benefit and support that our public safety colleagues get. I urge you to support HB 5176 and make this a reality for our Connecticut Public Safety Telecommunicators.

Sincerely and respectfully,

Maureen A. Will

Maureen A. Will CPE, RPL
Director